# RESOURCE EVALUATION

As defined by the Idaho Code, a recreational or natural river "means a waterway which possesses outstanding fish and wildlife, recreation, geologic or aesthetic values" [Idaho Code 42-1731 (7) and (9)]. A natural river is free of substantial impoundments, dams or other structures, and the riparian area is largely undeveloped. A recreational river may include some manmade development in the waterway or the riparian area. The resource evaluation is an exercise to identify rivers or streams that may be eligible for this designation. A designation is made only if the Board determines the value of preserving the waterway is in the public interest and outweighs developing the river for other beneficial uses. This determination is largely based on information received from the public and at Citizens Group meetings. State designation does not change or infringe upon existing water rights or other vested property rights.

Criteria used to identify outstanding resource values for fish and wildlife, recreation, and scenic values are briefly described in the following sections. The resource evaluation criteria and results were reviewed by the Citizens Group and agencies. Table 46 summarizes the river and stream reaches identified with outstanding resource values. Map 25 depicts the locations of these reaches.

## BIOLOGICAL VALUES EVALUATION

The River Biological Screening Procedure is a process to identify outstanding fish and wildlife values of a waterway. The procedure uses a number of different stream assessment methodologies, including the Environmental Protection Agency's Rapid Bioassessment Protocols and STREAMWALK, the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare/ Division of Environmental Quality's Beneficial Use Reconnaissance Procedure, and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game's StreamNet. The River Biological Screening Process involves a two-step analysis: 1) an aquatic and riparian assessment, an initial evaluation of twenty biological attributes; and 2) crucial species and habitats inventory, a final evaluation of the basin's unique species and habitats (Table 47, page 147).

### *Aquatic and Riparian Assessment*

Biological data were collected from various sources, including the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, the Boise and Payette national forests, the Bureau of Land Management, and several specific research studies described in the *Fish and Wildlife* section of the Payette River Basin Plan. The data were compiled for twenty biological attributes on each waterway evaluated. These attributes were divided into four components for ease of collecting and organizing the data:

1. *Habitat: Aquatic*- physical conditions and water quality associated with the waterway;
2. *Habitat: Riparian*- physical conditions and vegetation community characteristics in the riparian corridor;
3. *Species: Aquatic* - plant and animal species associated with the waterway; and
4. *Species: Riparian* - plant and animal species in the riparian corridor.

Based on available data, each waterway was evaluated for the number of attributes that were positive. An attribute was considered positive, if data were available, and the data indicated the characteristic contributed positively to the quality of the aquatic or riparian habitat.

# Map 25. Waterways with Outstanding Resource Values

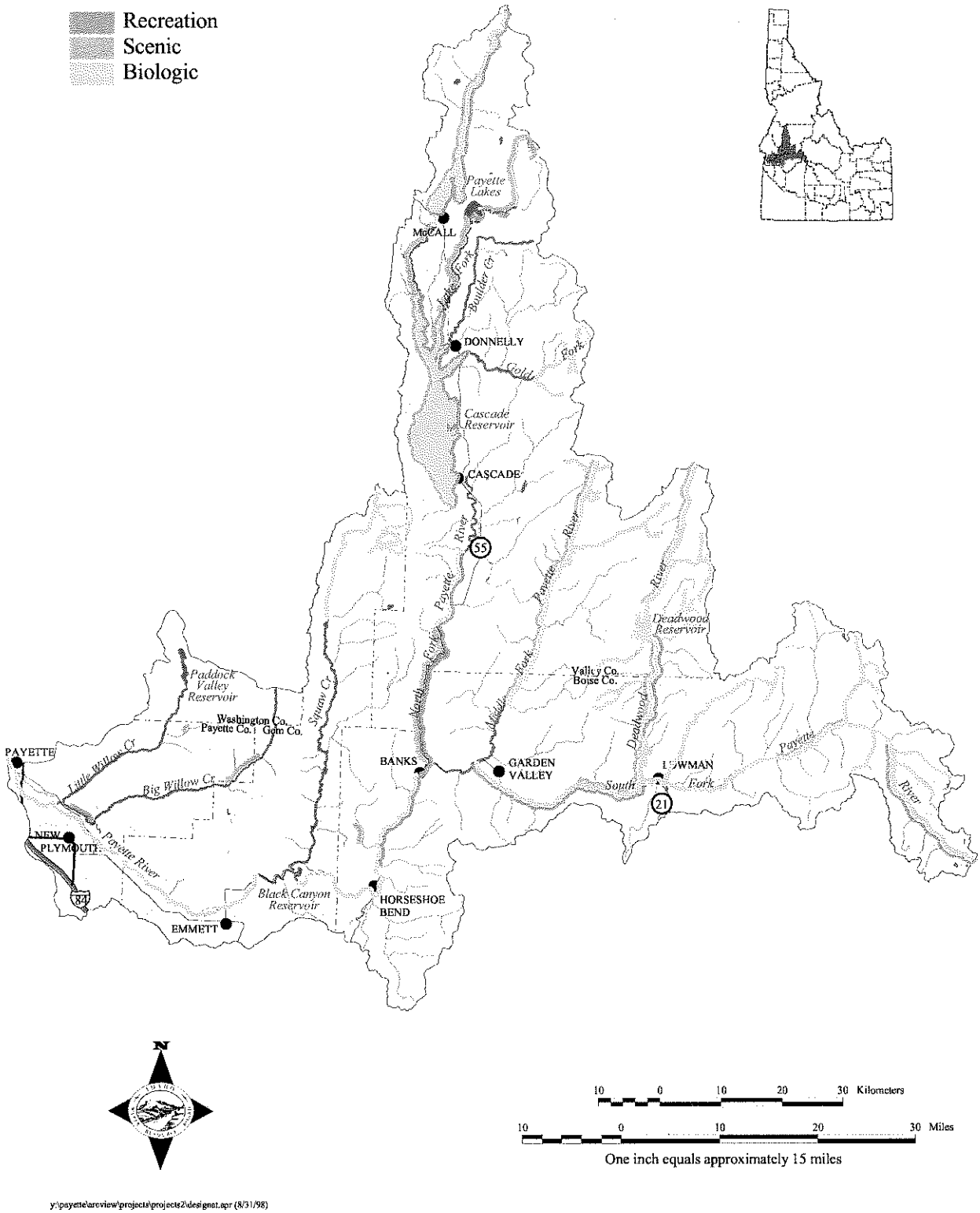


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**Table 46. Summary of Outstanding Resource Values for Waterways in the Payette River Basin.**

| STREAM REACH | FISH & WILDLIFE | RECREATION | SCENIC |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***NORTH FORK PAYETTE SUBBASIN*** | | | |
| ***North Fork Payette*** | | | |
| Headwaters to Squaw Meadows | X | X | |
| Squaw Meadows to SE 1/4 NW 1/4 of Sec. 17 T21N, R4E | X | X | X |
| SE 1/4 NW 1/4 of Sec. 17 T21N, R4E to Upper Payette Lake Dam (including Upper Payette Lake) | X | X | |
| Upper Payette Lake Dam to Payette Lake inlet | X | X | X |
| Payette Lake | | X | X |
| Payette Lake Outlet to Sheep Bridge | X | | |
| Sheep Bridge to Cascade Reservoir backwaters | X | | X |
| Cascade Reservoir | X | X | X |
| Cabarton Bridge to Smiths Ferry | X | X | |
| Smiths Ferry to NW 1/4 SW 1/4 of Sec. 22 T9 N R 3 E (just upstream of Phillips Creek) | | X | X |
| NW 1/4 SW 1/4 of Sec. 22 T9 N R 3 E (just upstream of Phillips Cr) to Banks | | X | |
| ***North Fork Lake Fork*** *(Headwaters to Lake Fork confluence)* | | | X |
| ***Lake Fork*** | | | |
| North and East Lake Fork confluence to Browns Pond outlet | | | X |
| Browns Pond outlet to Little Payette Lake | | X | X |
| Little Payette Lake | | X | |
| Little Payette Lake Dam to mouth | | | X |
| ***North Fork Gold Fork*** *(Headwaters to South Fork Gold Fork confluence) (includes unnamed perennial tributaries above Lodgepole Creek)* | X | | |
| ***South Fork Gold Fork*** *(Headwaters to North Fork Gold Fork confluence)* | X | | |
| ***SOUTH FORK PAYETTE SUBBASIN*** | | | |
| ***South Fork Payette*** | | | |
| Headwaters to Sawtooth NRA boundary | X | X | |
| Sawtooth NRA boundary to Canyon Creek | X | | |
| Canyon Creek to Tenmile Creek | X | | X |
| Tenmile Creek to Clear Creek | X | | |
| Clear Creek to Deadwood River | X | | X |
| Deadwood River to Big Gallagher Creek | X | X | X |
| Big Gallagher Creek to Banks | X | X | |
| ***Goat Creek*** *(Blue Rock Lake Creek to South Fork Payette confluence)* | X | | |
| ***Baron Creek*** *(Braxton Lake Creek to South Fk Payette confluence)* | X | | |
| ***Wapiti Creek*** *(Headwaters to mouth)* | X | | |
| ***Canyon Creek*** *(Headwaters to mouth, including North Fk and South Fk Canyon Cr)* | X | | |
| ***Clear Creek*** *(Headwaters to mouth)* | X | | |
| ***Deadwood River*** | | | |
| Headwaters to Deadwood Reservoir backwaters | X | | X |
| Deadwood Reservoir | X | | |
| Deadwood Dam to Julie Creek | X | X | X |
| Julie Creek to South Fork Payette confluence | X | | X |
| ***Deer Creek*** *(headwaters to Deadwood confluence, including North and South Forks Deer Creek)* | X | | |

| STREAM REACH | FISH & WILDLIFE | RECREATION | SCENIC |
|---|---|---|---|
| **SOUTH FORK SUBBASIN (con'd)** | | | |
| ***South Fork Beaver Creek*** *(one-eighth mile above reservoir to Deadwood Res.)* | X | | |
| *Trail Creek (Headwaters to Deadwood Reservoir)* | X | | |
| ***Warm Springs Creek*** *(Headwaters to East Fork Warm Springs confluence)* | X | | |
| ***Middle Fork Warm Springs*** *(Headwaters to Warm Springs confluence)* | X | | |
| ***East Fork Warm Springs*** *(Headwaters to Warm Springs confluence)* | X | | |
| ***Scott Creek*** *(Headwaters to South Fork Scott Creek confluence)* | X | | |
| ***Smith Creek*** *(Headwaters to mouth)* | X | | |
| ***Middle Fork Payette River*** | | | |
| Headwaters to Boiling Springs | X | | X |
| Boiling Springs to Auglebright Gulch | X | | X |
| Auglebright Gulch to Lightning Creek | X | | |
| ***Bull Creek*** *(Headwaters to Middle Fork Payette confluence)* | X | | |
| ***Oxtail Creek*** *(Headwaters to Bull Creek confluence)* | X | | |
| ***PAYETTE RIVER SUBBASIN*** | | | |
| ***Payette River*** | | | |
| Banks to Porter Creek | X | X | |
| Porter Creek to Black Canyon backwaters | X | | |
| Black Canyon Dam to Snake River confluence | X | | |
| ***Squaw Creek*** *(Headwaters to Second Fork Squaw Creek confluence)* | X | | |
| ***Pole Creek*** *(Headwaters to Squaw Creek confluence)* | X | | |
| ***Third Fork Squaw Creek*** *(Headwaters to Mesa Creek)* | X | | |
| *(includes unnamed perennial tributaries)* | | | |
| ***Big Willow Creek*** | | | |
| Jakes Creek to Rock Creek | | | X |
| Birding Island to Diversion Dam | | | X |
| ***Indian Creek*** | | | |
| Rattlesnake Creek to next tributary (unnamed located at NE 1/4 NE 1/4 Sec. 8 T 9 N R 2 W) | | | X |

## *Crucial Species and Habitats Inventory*

Species of habitats feature considered by biologists as regionally, nationally, or globally unique, such as the cottonwood gallery forest on the South Fork Snake River, considered biologically outstanding. In the Payette River Basin, these species and habitats include:

- bald eagle nesting
- bull trout focal habitat - The bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) was recently listed as a federally threatened species (June 5, 1998). Focal habitat reaches as defined in the Governor's Bull Trout Conservation Plan are "areas supporting a mosaic of high quality habitats that sustain a diverse or unusually productive complement of native species" (Batt, 1996).

**Table 47. River Biological Screening Procedure Data Sheet for the Payette River Basin.**

*I. AQUATIC AND RIPARIAN ASSESSMENT*

**HABITAT--Aquatic**

**D* +***

[ ][ ] 1. Bottom substrate type (observe in channel-forming pool tail-outs [at least 1/3 of stream width] and low gradient riffles): cobble and boulders dominant; fine sediment not dominant

[ ][ ] 2. Instream cover: large woody debris and/or undercut bank

[ ][ ] 3. Instream habitat: complexity of stream channel habitats present (riffles [or bends], runs, pools)

[ ][ ] 4. Water quality: at least one of the following DEQ classifications apply to study reach (circle applicable):

- Meets ***all*** beneficial uses; ***not*** 303(d) listed water body
- Outstanding Resource Water (nominated or designated)
- Special Resource Water

[ ][ ] 5. Critical spawning habitat

**HABITAT--Riparian**

**D +**

[ ][ ] 6. Bank stability: vegetation canopy and roots cover majority of bank and no slumping or eroding occurs

[ ][ ] 7. Riparian vegetation cover: dominated by shrubs and/or trees

[ ][ ] 8. Special management areas: at least one of the following occurs along study reach (circle applicable):

- Pioneer Area
- Priority Wetlands
- Research Natural Area
- Recovery Area
- Wildlife Refuge
- Wildlife Management Area
- Wilderness Area or proposed
- Hot Springs Aquatic Community
- Wild & Scenic River or eligible
- Special Interest Botanical Area
- Bull Trout Key Watershed
- Area of Critical Environmental Concern

*Critical wildlife habitat:*

[ ][ ] 9. wintering/calving/fawning

[ ][ ] 10. migratory/roosting

**SPECIES--Aquatic**

**D +**

[ ][ ] 11. Fishery classification: at least one of the following IDFG fishery classifications applies to study reach (circle applicable):

- Trophy
- Preservation
- Quality
- Wild Trout
- Anadromous

[ ][ ] 12. Fish species richness: diversity (no. species with balanced abundances) relatively high

[ ][ ] 13. Fish species composition: predominantly native or game species

[ ][ ] 14. Aquatic insect composition: predominantly species of low pollution/sediment tolerance (e.g., EPT)

*Rare aquatic biota:*

[ ][ ] 15. federal listed species
Names/classification_____

[ ][ ] 16. State priority species (IDFG/CDC ranking)
Names/classification_____

**SPECIES--Riparian**

**D +**

[ ][ ] 17. Riparian species richness: diversity (total no. species with balanced abundances) relatively high

[ ][ ] 18. Riparian species composition: predominantly native species

*Rare riparian biota:*

[ ][ ] 19. Federal listed species
Names/classification _____

[ ][ ] 20. State priority species (IDFG/CDC ranking)
Names/classification_____

*II. CRUCIAL SPECIES AND HABITATS*

[ ] Bull Trout Focal Habitat

[ ] Bald Eagle Nesting

* If data are available for a particular waterway attribute, it is indicated in the first column; and for those with a affirmative response (+), the second column is checked.

### *Results*

Both components of the evaluation were considered to determine if a waterway possessed outstanding biological values. Waterways with outstanding biological values needed to fulfill the following criteria: at least 50 percent (5 minimum) of the available aquatic and riparian data were positive, *and/or* crucial species and habitats were present. Table 48 summarizes the assessment for the waterways evaluated in the Payette River Basin.

## RECREATION EVALUATION

The recreation evaluation, conducted by Idaho Department of Water Resources personnel, focused on recreational opportunities occurring within specific river or stream reaches. The evaluation entailed identification of recreation units; analysis of the recreational diversity and importance of recreational opportunities in each unit; and determination of a final value -- outstanding, high, or moderate to low.

The river reaches within the Payette River Basin were grouped into twenty-five segments or discrete recreation units delineated on the basis of land use patterns, access, and/or recreational use patterns (Table 49, page 151). Each recreation unit was individually evaluated for recreational diversity and the importance of recreational opportunities. Specific recreational features of these units are summarized in evaluation forms.

***Recreational diversity*** is a measure of the variety of opportunities available in the recreation unit. Three criteria were assessed to arrive at a diversity value: 1) land-based and water-based recreation opportunities, 2) natural features, and 3) level of access. Land-based and water-based recreation activities occurring within the river corridor were identified through review of agency documents and maps describing recreation facilities, and communications with various agencies and user groups. Land-based activities include camping, hiking, or hunting. Water-based recreation includes fishing, swimming, and boating.

Natural features were identified which enhance recreation opportunities or experiences. These include description of water characteristics influencing the type of boating activity possible; summary of the aesthetic values of the unit; and identification of special wildlife habitat characteristics providing increased opportunities for wildlife observation or other wildlife-related recreation.

Level of access was described to provide information regarding the types of recreational activities possible, potential use volume, and opportunities for primitive or isolated versus a more developed recreation experience.

***Recreational importance*** was determined through review of four criteria: (1) unique or rare features which may enhance the recreation experience such as high quality fisheries or wildlife habitat; (2) public concern for the recreational values of the unit (determined by public comment and geographic draw of visitors); (3) use volume based on recreational survey data and agency consultation; and (4) special designations and/or agency recreation management objectives.

The final recreation evaluation class for each recreation unit was based on a combined assessment of diversity and importance. A recreation unit evaluated as outstanding: a) provides significant recreation opportunities encompassing a great diversity of activities (greater than 12); b) provides a unique or rare experience within the region or basin; and/or c) receives significant or the highest use. A recreation unit evaluated as high is characterized by river segments: a) receiving high use; b) high

**Table 48. Summary of Biological Evaluation in the Payette River Basin.** (Reaches marked with a * were found to have biologically outstanding values.)

| REACH[1] | AQUATIC AND RIPARIAN ASSESSMENT *(Total positive attributes/ Total attribute available)* | CRUCIAL SPECIES AND HABITAT[2] | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | ✔ | Description |
| *North Fork Payette River (Headwaters to Upper Payette Lake Dam) | 10/20 | | |
| *North Fork Payette River (Upper Payette Lake Dam to Fisher Creek) | 10/19 | | |
| *North Fork Payette River (Fisher Creek to Payette Lake) | 10/20 | | |
| Payette Lake | 7/19 | | |
| *North Fork Payette River (Payette Lake Outlet to backwaters Cascade Reservoir) | 11/19 | ✔ | Bald eagle nesting |
| *Cascade Reservoir | 3/19 | ✔ | Bald eagle nesting |
| Lake Fork Creek (Browns Pond to Little Payette Lake Dam) | 8/19 | | |
| Lake Fork Creek (Little Payette Lake Dam to Cascade Reservoir) | 8/19 | | |
| Gold Fork River (headwaters to Gold Fork Diversion Dam) | 5/19 | | |
| *South Fork Gold Fork River (unnamed tributary to North Fork Gold Fork confluence) | | ✔ | Bull trout focal habitat |
| *North Fork Gold Fork River and unnamed tributaries above Lodgepole Creek (headwaters to South Fork Gold Fork River confluence) | | ✔ | Bull trout focal habitat |
| North Fork Payette River (Cascade Dam to Cabarton) | 6/20 | ✔ | Bald eagle nesting |
| *North Fork Payette River (Cabarton to Smiths Ferry) | 11/20 | ✔ | Bald eagle nesting |
| North Fork Payette River (Smiths Ferry to Banks) | 7/19 | | |
| *South Fork Payette River (headwaters to confluence with Deadwood River) | 7/12 | ✔ | Bull trout focal habitat |
| *South Fork Payette River (Deadwood River to Middle Fork Payette River) | 7/13 | | |
| *Goat Creek (Blue Rock Lake Creek to South Fork Payette River) | | ✔ | Bull trout focal habitat |
| *Baron Creek (Braxon Lake Creek to South Fork Payette River) | | ✔ | Bull trout focal habitat |
| *Wapiti Creek ( headwaters to South Fork Payette River) | | ✔ | Bull trout focal habitat |
| *Canyon Creek including North and South Forks Canyon Creek (headwaters to South Fk Payette River) | | ✔ | Bull trout focal habitat |

| REACH[1] | AQUATIC AND RIPARIAN ASSESSMENT *(Total positive attributes/ Total attribute available)* | CRUCIAL SPECIES AND HABITAT[2] | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | ✔ | Description |
| *Clear Creek (headwaters to South Fork Payette River) | 10/16 | ✔ | Bull trout focal habitat |
| *Deadwood River (headwaters to Deadwood Reservoir Dam) | 12/17 | ✔ | Bull trout focal habitat |
| *Deadwood River (Deadwood Reservoir Dam to South Fork Payette River) | 10/18 | | |
| *Deer Creek, including North and South Forks Deer Creek (headwaters to Deadwood River) | | ✔ | Bull trout focal habitat |
| *South Fork Beaver Cr (approx. 1/8 mi. upstream of Deadwood Reservoir to Deadwood Reservoir) | | ✔ | Bull trout focal habitat |
| *Trail Creek (headwaters to Deadwood Reservoir) | | ✔ | Bull trout focal habitat |
| *Warm Springs Creek, and Middle and East Forks (headwaters to East Fk Warm Springs Cr confluence) | | ✔ | Bull trout focal habitat |
| *Scott Creek, and Smith Creek (headwaters to confluence with South Fork Scott Creek) | | ✔ | Bull trout focal habitat |
| *Middle Fork Payette and unnamed tributaries (headwaters to Lightning Cr confluence) | 10/17 | ✔ | Bull trout focal habitat |
| *Bull Creek and Oxtail Creek (headwaters to Middle Fork Payette River) | | ✔ | Bull trout focal habitat |
| Silver Creek (headwaters to Middle Fork Payette River) | 8/17 | | |
| Anderson Creek (headwaters to Middle Fork Payette River) | 7/17 | | |
| *Payette River (Middle Fork Payette River to Black Canyon Reservoir) | 10/15 | | |
| *Payette River (Black Canyon Dam to Snake River) | 9/15 | | |
| *Squaw Creek and unnamed tributaries (headwaters to confluence with Second Fork Squaw Ck) | 11/17 | ✔ | Bull trout focal habitat |
| *Third Fork Squaw Creek and unnamed tributaries (headwaters to Mesa Creek) | | ✔ | Bull trout focal habitat |
| *Pole Creek (headwaters to Squaw Creek) | | ✔ | Bull trout focal habitat |

[1] Complete reach descriptions are available for public review in Idaho Department of Water Resources files.
[2] Bull trout focal habitat upstream and downstream boundaries do not necessarily coincide with the total evaluated reach

Table 49. Recreation Evaluation Criteria and Results for the Payette River Basin.

| | |
|---|---|
| OUTSTANDING<br><br>**Significant recreational opportunities available as indicated by a great diversity of activities ( > 12 activities); unique or rare experience; and/or highest use areas.** | **North Fork Payette** *(Headwaters to Payette Lake Inlet)* - significant diversity of recreation opportunities<br><br>**Payette Lake** - significant diversity of recreation opportunities<br><br>**Cascade Reservoir** - significant diversity of recreation opportunities<br><br>**North Fork Payette** *(Cabarton Bridge to Banks)* - one of the reaches comprising a diverse array of whitewater boating opportunities attracting people nationally to the Payette River Basin, including a reach considered the most challenging whitewater in North America; significant boating and scenic driving use<br><br>**Lake Fork** *(Browns Pond outlet to Little Payette Lake)* - trophy trout fishing opportunities<br><br>**Little Payette Lake** - one of 16 trophy lake fisheries managed in Idaho<br><br>**South Fork Payette** *(Headwaters to Sawtooth National Recreation Area boundary)* - outstanding unroaded recreation experience<br><br>**South Fork Payette** *(Deadwood River to Banks)* - one of the reaches comprising a diverse array of whitewater boating opportunities attracting people nationally to the Payette River Basin; significant boating and camping use<br><br>**Deadwood** *(Deadwood Dam to Julie Creek)* - unique, unroaded, expert whitewater experience<br><br>**Payette** *(Banks to Porter Creek)* - one of the reaches comprising a diverse array of whitewater boating opportunities attracting people nationally to the Payette River Basin; significant boating and scenic driving use |
| HIGH<br><br>**River segments with a high use volume; high diversity (10 to 12 recreational activities); and/or a recreation opportunity which is unique but typical in the region.** | **North Fork Payette** *(Payette Lake Outlet to Cascade Reservoir backwaters)* - high diversity of recreation opportunities<br><br>**North Fork Payette** *(Cascade Dam to Cabarton Bridge)* - high use area below bridge<br><br>**North Fork of the Lake Fork** *(Headwaters to confluence with Lake Fork)* - moderate diversity of recreation opportunities, but rock climbing opportunities at Slick Rock area in the basin<br><br>**Lake Fork** *(Below Little Payette Lake to mouth)* - moderate to low diversity of recreation opportunities<br><br>**South Fork Payette** *(Sawtooth National Recreation Area boundary to Deadwood River)* - high diversity of recreation opportunities, high use area<br><br>**Middle Fork Payette** *(Boiling Springs to Tie Creek)* - high to moderate diversity of recreation opportunities<br><br>**Black Canyon Reservoir** - High to moderate diversity of recreation opportunities<br><br>**Payette** *(Black Canyon Dam to confluence with Snake River)* - high to moderate diversity of recreation opportunities |
| MODERATE AND LOW<br><br>**River segments with moderate to low use volume; moderate to low diversity of opportunities (less than 10 activities); and/or providing recreational opportunities typical and abundant within the region.** | **Lake Fork** *(Confluence with North Fork Lake Fork to Little Payette Lake Inlet)* - moderate diversity of recreation opportunities<br><br>**Deadwood** *(Headwaters to Deadwood Reservoir backwaters)* - moderate diversity of recreation opportunities<br><br>**Deadwood Reservoir** - moderate diversity of recreation opportunities<br><br>**Deadwood** *(Julie Creek to confluence with South Fork Payette)* - moderate to low recreation opportunities<br><br>**Middle Fork Payette** *(Headwaters to Boiling Springs)* - moderate diversity of recreation opportunities<br><br>**Middle Fork Payette** *(Tie Creek to confluence with South Fork Payette)* - low diversity of recreation opportunities<br><br>**Payette** *(Porter Creek to Black Canyon backwaters)* - moderate diversity of recreation opportunities |

diversity (10 to 12 activities); and/or c) providing an important recreation experience which is unique but typical for the region. Moderate to low designations define those river segments with a) recreational opportunities typical in the region; b) receiving moderate to low use; and/or c) having moderate to low recreation diversity (less than 10).

Table 49 summarizes the results of the recreation evaluation for river reaches in the Payette River Basin. The evaluation focused on the North Fork, South Fork, Middle Fork and Main Payette rivers, Deadwood River and Lake Fork.

## SCENIC VALUES EVALUATION

The objective of the scenic values evaluation was to determine the distinctiveness or scenic quality of landscape settings. The evaluation involved two steps. One was to separate landscapes along stream reaches into individual units. The second was to evaluate the scenic distinction or aesthetic value of these visual units.

### *Delineating Visual Units*

Visual units define a landscape area which has similar spatial characteristics such as landform, vegetation, water form, or cultural modifications (Tetlow and Sheppard, 1980). Noticeable changes in any of these that significantly change the viewing experience define the boundary between visual units. Visual units provide a frame of reference to later evaluate the scenic value of landscape features.

Visual unit boundaries were determined by considering a river or stream as a linear viewing corridor or series of viewing experiences. The outermost boundary of the unit is defined by the edge of canyon walls, ridgeline, or the extent of the foreground/middleground viewshed. Any distinct or conspicuous change in landscape elements which significantly changed the viewing experience as one progressed along the corridor marks the boundary between visual units. For the basin, visual unit boundaries generally indicate changes in the stream pattern or water characteristics (i.e., free flowing water versus reservoirs, or single channel versus braided, differences in canyon wall scale and enclosure, presence of unique landforms, changes in density and types of vegetation patterns, and/or changes in the degree or type of land use patterns).

Visual unit boundaries were delineated during site visits conducted by Idaho Department of Water Resources personnel between 1993 and 1998. Landscape characteristics were photographed and recorded on maps. Forms were also completed documenting characteristic landform, vegetation, water character, cultural modifications, and other characteristics for each unit.

An evaluation of scenic values was not completed for all rivers and streams in the basin. The evaluation focused on major waterways such as the Payette, North Fork Payette, South Fork Payette, Middle Fork Payette and Deadwood rivers, and tributaries as suggested by public input.

### *Scenic Distinction Classes*

Each visual unit was evaluated for scenic distinction. Scenic distinction is a measure of the aesthetic quality of a landscape from a regional perspective. This evaluation must consider the landscape features within the context of the region or physiographic province that it occurs. Therefore, landscape elements for the Payette River Basin are evaluated relative to typical landscape features in southwestern Idaho and not compared to northern Idaho landscapes.

The Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management have established procedures for measuring the aesthetic quality of landscapes. Both

procedures use similar criteria for measuring scenic values of landscapes. Scenic distinction for the Payette River Basin used the rating scale provided in Table 50. This chart was developed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management for use in evaluating scenic quality of public lands. The model assesses the degree of variety a landscape possesses. The premise behind this chart is that all landscapes have scenic value, but areas with the most variety or harmonious composition have the greatest value (U.S. Bureau of Land Management, 1986; U.S. Forest Service, 1974).

A numeric rating system is used to evaluate the degree of visual variety and harmonious composition of seven factors: landform, vegetation, water, color, adjacent scenery, scarcity, and cultural modifications. Ratings are based on basic elements of design (line, form, color, and texture) to describe and evaluate the landscape. Each factor was rated using a value of one to five (with the exception of cultural modifications which is rated -4 to 2) based on the amount of variety, contrast, harmony, or distinctiveness within the unit – the higher the rating, the greater variety or more distinctive the feature. The components comprising the landscape are evaluated individually.

A scenic evaluation was completed for each visual unit identified in the Payette River Basin. A narrative description of each of the elements is prepared and each element given a numerical rating. A final rating is derived by totaling the scores for all seven landscape factors. This score determines the scenic distinction category:

class A = outstanding - scores of 32 to 19
class B = high - scores of 18 to 12
class C = moderate/low - scores of 11 or less

Table 51 (page 155) describes the scenic evaluation results for the Payette River Basin.

**Table 50. Scenic Distinction Evaluation Criteria.**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **LANDFORM** | High vertical relief, severe surface variation; detail features dominant 5 | Steep canyons; variety in shape and pattern of landforms; detail features not dominant 3 | Low rolling hills; flat valley bottoms; few or no interesting land features 1 |
| **VEGETATION** | Variety of vegetation types in interesting forms, textures, and patterns 5 | Some variety in vegetation, but only one or two major types 3 | Little or no variety in vegetation 1 |
| **WATER** | Clear and clean; cascading whitewater; dominant feature in landscape 5 | Flowing or still, but not dominant in landscape 3 | Absent, or present but slack water or slow moving 0 |
| **COLOR** | Rich color combination; vivid color; pleasing color contrasts 5 | Some intensity or variety in color and contrast, but not dominant element 3 | Subtle color variations or contrasts; generally mute tones 1 |
| **ADJACENT SCENERY** | Adjacent scenery greatly enhances visual quality 5 | Adjacent scenery moderately enhances overall visual quality 3 | Adjacent scenery has little or no influence on overall visual quality 0 |
| **SCARCITY** | Very rare in region; consistent chance for exceptional wildlife, wildflower viewing, etc. 5 | Distinctive, although somewhat similar to others in the region 3 | Interesting within its setting, but fairly common within the region 1 |
| **CULTURAL MODIFICATIONS** | Modifications add favorable to visual variety while promoting visual harmony 2 | Modifications add little or no visual variety and introduce no discordant elements 0 | Modifications add variety but are very discordant and promote strong disharmony -4 |

Source: U.S. Bureau of Land Management, 1986.

Table 51. Results of the Scenic Values Evaluation for the Payette River Basin.

| SCENIC DISTINCTION CATEGORY | REACH |
|---|---|
| **OUTSTANDING (Class A)**<br><br>Landscapes with significant variety in landscape features; and/or possessing distinctive or unique, rare features<br>(received a score of 32 to 19). | ***North Fork Payette Subbasin***<br>North Fork Payette - Squaw Meadows<br>North Fork Payette - Upper Payette Lake Dam to Payette Lake inlet<br>Payette Lake<br>North Fork Payette - Sheep Bridge to Cascade Reservoir backwaters<br>Cascade Reservoir<br>North Fork Payette - Smiths Ferry to upstream of Phillips Creek confluence<br>North Fork Lake Fork - Headwater to confluence<br>Lake Fork - confluence to Little Payette Lake<br>Lake Fork - Payette Lake outlet to mouth<br><br>***South Fork Payette***<br>South Fork Payette - Canyon Creek to Tenmile Creek<br>South Fork Payette - Clear Creek to Big Gallagher Creek<br>Deadwood River - Headwaters to Deadwood Reservoir backwaters<br>Deadwood River - Deadwood Dam to South Fork Payette confluence<br>Middle Fork Payette - Headwaters to Auglebright Gulch<br><br>***Main Payette Subbasin***<br>Big Willow - Jakes Creek to Rock Creek<br>Big Willow - Birding Island area to Diversion Dam<br>Indian Creek - Rattlesnake Creek to unnamed tributary located at NE 1/4 NE 1/4 of Sec. 8, T9N, R2W |
| **HIGH (Class B)**<br><br>Landscapes which provide moderate variety in landscape features<br>(received a score of 18 to 12) | ***North Fork Payette Subbasin***<br>North Fork Payette - Headwaters to Squaw Meadows<br>North Fork Payette - Downstream of Squaw Meadows to Upper Payette Lake inlet<br>Upper Payette Lake<br>North Fork Payette - Payette Lake outlet to Sheep Bridge<br>North Fork Payette - Cascade Dam Smiths Ferry<br>North Fork Payette - Upstream of Phillips Creek to Banks<br>Gold Fork - Headwaters to mouth<br><br>***South Fork Payette Subbasin***<br>South Fork Payette - Headwaters to Canyon Creek<br>South Fork Payette - Tenmile Creek to Clear Creek<br>South Fork Payette - Big Gallagher Creek to Banks<br>Pine Creek - Headwaters to mouth<br>Deadwood Reservoir<br><br>***Main Payette Subbasin***<br>Main Payette - Banks to Black Canyon Dam<br>Brownlee Creek - Headwaters to mouth<br>Harris Creek - Headwaters to mouth<br>Squaw Creek - Headwaters to mouth<br>Big Willow Creek - Spring (SW 1/4 NW 1/4 of Sec. 24, T10N R1W) to Jakes Cr<br>Jakes Creek - Headwaters to mouth<br>Little Willow Creek - Paddock Reservoir to Ringer Gulch |
| **MODERATE TO LOW (Class C)**<br><br>Landscapes where characteristic features posses little variety<br>(received a score of 11 or less). | ***Main Payette Subbasin***<br>Big Willow Creek - Headwaters to spring (SW 1/4 NW 1/4 of Sec. 24, T10N R1W)<br>Big Willow Creek - Rock Creek to Birding Island area<br>Big Willow Creek - Diversion Dam to mouth<br>Little Willow Creek - Ringer Gulch to Big Willow Creek confluence |